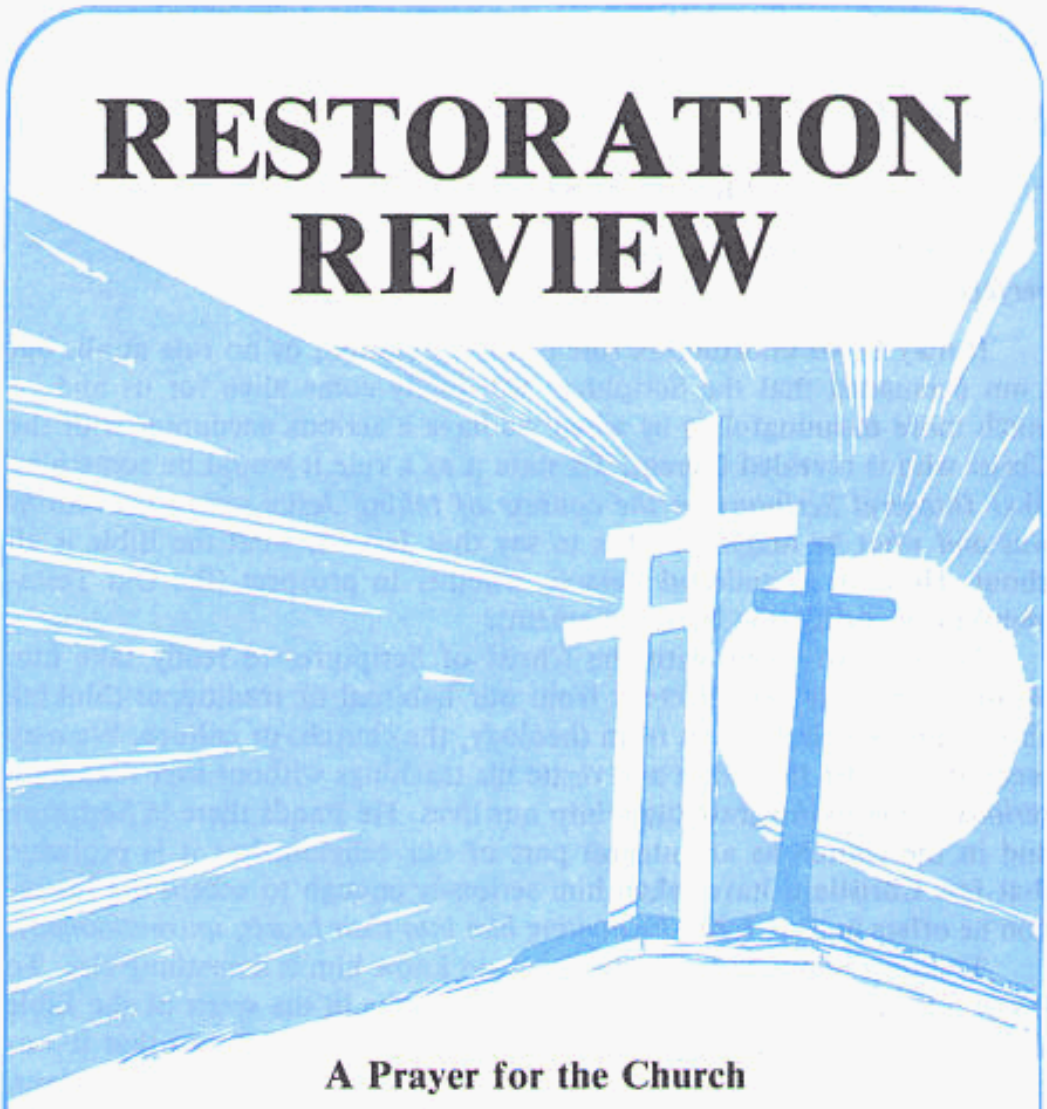
RESTORATION REVIEW



A Prayer for the Church

Gracious Father, we pray for the holy Catholic Church. Fill it with all truth, in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in any thing it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of Jesus Christ thy Son our Savior. *Amen — The Book of Common Prayer* (1789)

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The Sense of Scripture: Studies in Interpretation . . .

TAKING JESUS SERIOUSLY

Therefore you shall he perfect, just as your father in heaven is perfect. -Mt. 5:48

It may be an unorthodox rule of interpretation, or no rule at all, but I am persuaded that the Scriptures will really come alive for us and be much more meaningful to us when we have a serious encounter with the Christ who is revealed therein. To state it as a rule it would be something like: *Interpret Scripture in the context of taking Jesus seriously, who he was and what he taught.* This is to say that Jesus is what the Bible is all about. Re is its Wonderful Person, whether in prospect (the Old Testament) or in reality (the New Testament).

To come to terms with the Christ of Scripture, to really take him seriously, may be far different from our habitual or traditional thinking about him, whether drawn from theology, the church, or culture. We may recount episodes in his life and recite his teachings without ever making a *serious* effort to integrate them into our lives. Re stands there in Scripture and in the church as an integral part of our religion, but it is probable that few Christians have taken him seriously enough to accept the invitation he offers in Rev. 3:20: *by inviting him into their hearts, unconditionally.*

To know about Jesus in one thing, to know him is something else. To know a lot about the Bible is one thing, to take in the spirit of the Bible is something else. The problem in the church at Corinth was that it was carnal, according to 1 Cor. 3:1. They were Christians, but *carnal* Christians, and so they did not understand the things of God. The apostle lays down a crucial condition for understanding the things of God: *they are spiritually discerned* (1 Cor. 2:14). He avows that "the natural man" cannot understand spiritual things, for they are foolish to him. By "natural" (or *unspiritual* as some versions render it) the apostle probably refers to the disbeliever whose worldly wisdom and selfish concerns keep him from accepting or understanding the revelation of God. It is foolish to him because it runs counter to his willful thinking.

So the apostle names three classes of people that include all of mankind that have been exposed to God's revelation: the natural (disbelievers blinded by pride and arrogance); the carnal (believers blinded by fleshly desires or worldly thinking); the spiritual (believers who are Spirit-filled, seriously committed to Christ).

He is saying that only one of those classes really understands what God's revelation is about. So we have a crucial principle in biblical interpretation: *the Scriptures (in their essence) are spiritually discerned; only "He who is spiritual' (1 Cor. 2:14-15) really understands the things of God.*

Since the apostle would concede that there are degrees within these classifications, i.e., some are more "natural" than others, some are less "carnal" than others, etc., we can reduce our principle to this: *to the degree that we are spiritual is the degree of our discernment.* And so as we grow in the Spirit we grow in understanding.

The text chosen for this installment illustrates the truth of the apostle's hard saying. In Mt. 5:48 Jesus clearly mandates that we are to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect, which readily runs counter to the way a natural, carnal mind thinks. If Jesus had said, "Do the best you can under the circumstances" or "Be as nearly perfect as you can be," he would have conformed to human wisdom. But he said for us to be perfect, *as* God is perfect. *Impossible!*, says the carnal mind. To the extent that we are spiritual in our thinking to that extent we will take the standard of perfection seriously. When we insist that no one can be perfect we deny ourselves of the blessing that God bestows upon those who take Jesus seriously in this regard. The context shows that Jesus is talking about loving one's neighbor, forgiving the wrongdoer, doing good to all, the just and the unjust alike, as God does. He is not talking about sinlessness. God loves, God forgives, God does good, *perfectly.* Jesus tells us to be like that. *Forgive!*, not halfheartedly, but perfectly like God does. Can we forgive like that? Yes, or Jesus would never have said what he said. Perfect love, forgiveness, goodness may not come in a day and maybe not in years, but it will come, if not in this world then in the next, if we take our Lord seriously and keep moving toward the perfection that he will give us the grace to cultivate.

The one who says in his heart, "I'm going to love and forgive like God does" will be much nearer to the teaching of Jesus than he who follows the world and says, "No one can be perfect." So, Mt. 5:48 is spiritually discerned! If we are truly committed to Christ and consumed with the desire to do the will of God, we will not flinch at our Lord's call for perfection. We will resolve to spend our life here and in eternity achieving it.

Another example is what Jesus said to those who were the closest to him, and so each of us can hear him saying the same thing to us: "Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of God" (Mt. 18:3). Childlikeness! Now let's be honest and admit that such teaching is not taken very seriously even in the church, not even by the very best of us. Baptism we can relate to, even giving and churchgoing, but childlikeness? What does the carnal mind know of the innocence, purity, trust, forgiveness, teachableness, transparency, humility of a little child? How often does being a Christian transform one into a little child?

Jesus did not say to do the best you can, but to be a child again. Those who are "of the Spirit" will take such demanding teaching seriously. To most others, who think in terms of macho values, it is so much foolishness. "Nice guys come in last," the world (and the church?) says.

The poet Elizabeth Allen may have caught the essence of what Jesus sought to convey to his friends when she wrote those moving lines:

> Backward, turn backward, O Time, in your flight,
> Make me a child again just for tonight.

The question we have to face is whether we really want to follow our Lord's unqualified demands. Childlikeness can be ours by means of his grace, if *we really want it and are willing to take Jesus seriously.*

The apostle Peter probably felt proud of himself that he could think in terms of forgiving up to seven times. Most of us (of the flesh) would consider that more than ample and would commend Peter for his magnanimity. But not Jesus. He laid on the apostle a forgiveness that knows no limits, for "seventy times seven" is not simply 490 but infinity itself.

We are not only to love our enemies (including those who criticize us and seek to do us in?) but to pray for them and bless them. We are even to seek their good. This is difficult if not impossible teaching for those of us in the western world who value revenge and aggressiveness. It is not that we willfully reject the standards that Jesus lays down, but simply that we do not allow ourselves to take them seriously. It would help immensely if we would pray to be perfect, infinitely forgiving, extravagantly loving and prayerful for those we dislike. We tend to give it all a lick and a miss, a hands-in-pocket attitude. The crucial, life-changing teaching of Jesus is not all that important to us.

While Jesus assures us that "You cannot serve God and money," we are convinced that we can. If Jesus warns us of the difficulty of the rich entering into the kingdom of God, we remain rather certain that this is no problem.

Part of the problem of not taking Jesus seriously may be over-familiarity, and what is more familiar than the story of the Good Samaritan? And yet it is the most disquieting portion of Scripture if we really take it seriously. Its thrust lies in the way Jesus changes the question. While he is asked to identify our neighbor, he turns the question to "Who proved neighbor to him who fell among robbers?" It wasn't the poor guy in trouble who was neighbor, but the Good Samaritan, of a race despised by those listening to the story, who *proved* to be neighbor to the one in need.

That is the key word in Christian commitment, *proved.* "Which one *proved* that he loved God by serving the one in need?," is the question that established the point of the story. It is much easier to get involved in *defining* a neighbor than in *being* one. We prove ourselves to be a neighbor in only one way: *helping others.*

You can fancy a bevy of theologians gathered at a Holiday Inn for a symposium on "The Concept of Neighborliness." One talks about it in terms of post-exilic Judaism, another in relation to Babylonian and Canaanite antecedents, while a third analyses the subject in the light of the non-Christian religions, etc., etc. No sweat to that. No "take up your Cross and follow me" in it. But the cook who worked overtime preparing their meals that day, be he black or white, bore his tired body to a halfway house to work more hours on his own time feeding the hungry who came in off the streets.

Which one *proved* neighbor? And which one really understands (spiritually discerns) the story of the Good Samaritan?

There are some disturbing facts about our world that should help us discern what Jesus is teaching in this story, such as:

> About one-half of the world's population (some two billion people) make less than $200 per person per year.
>
> Most of the people of the Third World live in such degrading conditions that it defies description.
>
> Upwards of 100 million people in the southern hemisphere of our world are at this moment in danger of starvation. Another 400 million are chronically malnourished. Fully one billion people do not get nearly enough to eat.
>
> Children, women, and the aged suffer the most among the world's poor.

If we take Jesus seriously, will not the story of the Good Samaritan motivate us to consume less, live more frugally, and share more abundantly with the world's poor? There are many ways in which we can do this, one being through trustworthy world organizations that are involved in such work, such as Food for the Hungry and World Vision. If churches want to become true neighbors to a suffering world, they can start by spending less on themselves and more on those that have "fallen among thieves." The evil of all this is compounded by the fact that we in the "Christian" western world are often the "thieves" in that we prosper at the expense of the underdeveloped nations.

We are left with the question that will both open up the Scriptures to us as never before and transform our lives from selfish consumers to proven neighbors to a troubled world: *Will we take Jesus seriously? —the Editor*

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Visiting the Churches in My Home Town . . .

THE EPISCOPALIANS: RICH IN TRADITION

(This is the first of several installments of my report on visiting all the churches in my home city of Denton, Texas. I am not only visiting each denomination but each congregation of every denomination, My reason for doing this is mostly personal in that I sense a responsibility to be better informed firsthand on what other churches are doing and to worship with believers of diverse persuasions. So far I have visited 39 churches of 17 denominations and plan to complete my mission in a few more months. While these have all been Sunday visits (except the Seventh Day Adventist!), I always attend a Church of Christ also, either my own congregation or another one that meets at an earlier hour. Taking advantage of varying hours and by an occasional Sunday night visit, I have sometimes attended three churches in one day. In this extended series I hope to share with my readers the incredibly enriching experience I have had and continue to have.)

There are two congregations of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States in my home town, the St. Barnabas Episcopal Church and the St. David of Wales Episcopal Church. The names are reflective of the rich tradition of this denomination. Barnabas was of course the companion of the apostle Paul, while David of Wales was a martyr of the faith a few centuries later.

Historians usually date the origin of the Anglican church with the expulsion of Henry VIII from the Roman church in 1533 when he divorced Catherine of Arogan because she bore him no male heir and married Anne Boleyn, whom he later beheaded as he did other of his wives. Once hailed as "Defender of the Faith" by the pope because of his opposition to Luther, Henry now rejected the papacy and declared himself head of the Church of England. But the Episcopalians do not trace their beginnings to the ugly story of Henry VIII, for they find bishops all the way back to 314 A.D. when missionaries from Gaul brought the gospel to the British Isles. They note that resistance to the papacy in England began long before Henry. Moreover, they believe that their faith, including the holy orders of the clergy, has a continuous and unbroken existence back to Christ and the apostles.

There are some 67 million Episcopalians around the world, plus 88 non-Anglican dioceses with whom they are in communion, such as the Old Catholic churches of Europe (but not Roman), the Syrian Church in India, Philippine Independent Church, as well as churches in Pakistan and Bangladesh. They are also in partial communion with churches behind the Iron Curtain. Where they are the strongest they are known as the Church of England, Church of Wales, Church of Scotland, Church of Canada. These all have primates known as the

Archbishop. Only the Church of the United States, which dates back to 1784, has no Archbishop, which is probably due to colonial America's suspicion of ecclesiastical authority. The head man in the United States is called the Presiding Bishop. He heads what is called the General Convention, which consists of two bodies, the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies.

If Episcopal government is similar to the United States government, there is a reason. Some of the founding fathers who created the U.S. Constitution were Anglicans who also created the government of their church, and you notice the dates are about the same. The Episcopal Church is both constitutional and democratic, and thus one of the freest denominations in America. The House of Deputies is made up of clergy and laity elected by their dioceses. Each parish (local congregation) elects its own representatives, called the vestry, which is responsible for all the corporate affairs and for carrying out the laws of the church. Where there are as many as six parishes there can be a diocese, ruled over by a bishop. But it is the vestry, in consultation with the bishop, that calls the rector (pastor) to serve the congregation. Besides the bishop, each diocese is also run by a convention composed of the clergy of the diocese and lay people elected by the parishes.

The role of the laity is pronounced in the Episcopal Church, as its polity would suggest. After all, 99% of all Episcopalians are lay people who are expected to share extensively in the affairs of the church. This is evident in their worship. The sermons I heard in the two churches in Denton were very short, six to eight minutes, while the bulk of the service was the worship of the people. They insist that they are not an "audience" of spectators gathered to hear a lecture, but the Body of Christ at worship. And so there are readings, hymns, confessions, prayers, and responses involving the assembled Body.

Their sanctuaries, which they consider holy because of the altar on which Holy Eucharist is served every Sunday, have kneelers in the pews on which the people kneel during prayers. And they genuflect to the altar as they enter and leave the pew on which they are seated. An Episcopal edifice is as a rule rather elegant. This is because they consider it dedicated to God as a thing of beauty and holiness.

Being a liturgical church, which means that it follows a prescribed ritual of public worship, the Episcopal church may be seen as weak in doctrine, but when one studies its teaching he sees that it is strong in dogma. Take this statement on the meaning of the gospel, which is taken from a booklet entitled *The Episcopal Church: Essential Facts.*

> The Good News is that God is the Lord of all life; that although sinful humanity cannot earn or deserve God's love, his love is freely given; that the company of forgiven people, living together as the Church, form a community in which they, and others who join with them, receive new life and power; that

> in Jesus Christ, God has raised humanity's distorted nature to what it was intended to be, so that insofar as any person lives in Christ he is freed from the slavery of sin and is assured of the Kingdom of God.

The same booklet describes baptism as "into the Body of Christ," and while they baptize people of all ages and by sprinkling they will baptize by immersion upon request. One Episcopal priest kindly told a Church of Christ parent that he understood her position and that he would gladly immerse her children when they became 'of age." A member at St. David's, once a member of the Christian Church, told me the rector there is agreeable to immersion. Equally noteworthy is that the Episcopalians accept the baptism of any other Christian church, and they do not believe in rebaptism. They believe in "one baptism for the remission of sins, and once performed it need not be repeated.

The Rite of Confirmation recognizes that the child is now old enough to be received as a responsible member of the fellowship. The child "was joined to" the church (1,ecause of his parent's commitment) when baptized, but "joins" on his own accord when he undergoes Confirmation. He then partakes of his First Communion.

While the Roman church has seven sacraments, the Episcopal has but two, Baptism and Communion. Communion, also called the Holy Sacrament, the Lord's Supper, the Holy Eucharist, or even the Mass in "High Church" congregations, is described in the Catechism as "the continual remembrance of his life, death, and resurrection, until his coming again." While most churches make preaching central and celebrate Communion only occasionally, the Episcopal church emphasizes the Supper to the point that a Sunday service may be described as "The Holy Eucharist," with the entire service built around it, and no preaching. Other Sunday services that include a sermon and readings from the Scriptures are called "The Ministry of the Word" and will not have Communion. But every Episcopal church will celebrate the Lord's Supper in at least one service each Sunday, as well as other occasions.

The difference between "High Church," which is more descriptive of St. Barnabas, and "Low Church," which better describes St. David's, and this distinction holds true throughout Anglicanism, is a matter of emphasis put on ritual. "Low Church" seeks to avoid the elaborate ritual of the Roman church. The Episcopal Church of Ireland, for instance, is traditionally "Low" because of its anti-Roman attitude, while "High" churches in England and the United States may appear indistinguishable from a Roman Catholic service. But all Episcopal churches reject the papacy and are not in fellowship with the Roman church.

The Episcopal service follows the Church Year, which is divided into Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost. So, if you had a 1987 calendar and knew that Epiphany (celebrating the manifestation of Christ to Gentiles in form of the Magi) came on January 6, and I told you I visited St. Barnabas on "The Seventh Sunday After the Epi-

phany" (which appeared on the Order of Worship), you could figure I was there on March 1, 1987. And my presence at St. David's on "The Fourth Sunday in Advent" would be the Sunday before Christmas.

I might mention in passing that at my own Church of Christ here in Denton we now celebrate the four Sundays of Advent by lighting candles. We have four candles in a decorated tray. On the First Sunday of Advent (four Sundays before Christmas) a child lights the first candle. The next Sunday a child lights two candles and so on until the fourth Sunday, the Lord's day before Christmas, when all four candles are lighted and burn during our service, representing the Light that came into the world when Christ was born. We may well be the only Church of Christ in the world that follows the Church Year in this way. It is a transformation for us, for we were once so informal that I described our congregation as a "non-church church." The coming of a new minister made the difference. We are now a "High Church" Church of Christ! The Episcopalians tell me that that is what determines "High" and "Low" - the kind of pastor you have!

There is no way to understand the Anglican faith apart from *The Book of Common Prayer* (first American edition, 1789), that goes back to the *First Book of Common Prayer* in England in 1549. Its 1,001 pages deal with "Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church," and includes the Daily Office (morning and evening prayers), the Great Litany (to be said or sung before the Eucharist), the Collects (prayers for Holy Days), Liturgies (for Special Days), and ceremonies for baptism, the Supper, Pastoral Offices (such as Confirmation, Marriage, Death, Burial), Episcopal Services (such as ordination of bishop or priest). It also includes all the Psalms, the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed (the only creeds accepted by Anglicans). Along with a hymnal a copy is in every pew. It is a guide for private and public worship. At the St. Barnabas service it was turned to by the worshippers nine times, at St. David's eleven times. Beside the Bible itself, it must be the most spiritual, devotional book ever written, one reason being its extensive use of Scripture.

It also contains An Outline of the Faith, commonly called the Catechism, which is studied in preparation for Confirmation. It is such a rich source of doctrinal instruction that it could be studied with great profit by all churches. The sections on Human Nature and Sin and Redemption reflect not the slightest tinge of Calvinism. "Sin is seeking our own will instead of the will of God, thus distorting our relationship with God, with other people, and with all creation," it reads. Baptism is described as the sacrament "by which God adopts us as his children and makes us members of Christ's Body." The Holy Spirit is described as the Lord who enables us to grow in the likeness of Christ, and in answer to "How do we recognize the truths taught by the Holy Spirit?," the answer is "We recognize truths taught by the Holy Spirit when they are in accord with the Scriptures."

On the nature of the church the Catechism reads, "The Church is one, because it is one Body, under one Head, our Lord Jesus Christ," and "The Church is the community of the New Covenant." At St. David's there was prayer for the universal church of Jesus Christ.

I am especially impressed with the Catechism's description of the church as "the community of the New Covenant." Other references indicate that the Episcopalians, unlike many of the rest of us, understand what the Old and New Covenants are. After identifying a covenant with God as a relationship initiated by God, to which a body of people responds in faith, it goes on to ask:

Q. What is the Old Covenant?

A. The Old Covenant is the one given by God to the Hebrew people.

Q. What is the New Covenant?

A. The New Covenant is the new relationship with God, given by Jesus Christ, the Messiah, to the apostles: and, through them, to all who believe in him.

The Churches of Christ/Christian Churches would do well to consult *The Book of Common Prayer* on this score, for we have been misled by the idea that the New Covenant is the whole of the New Testament. This has led us to the damaging conclusion that unity and fellowship are predicated upon a correct understanding of and obedience to everything written in the New Testament. Once we see that we unite with other Christians on the basis of a new relationship with Jesus Christ (the New Covenant), we will no longer suppose that we have to see everything in the New Testament alike before we can enjoy fellowship with one another. We even make such issues as speaking in tongues, the millennium, and instrumental music a test of being true to the New Covenant.

That the Episcopalians understand that a covenant, Old or New, is something far different from the writings of the Bible may be one reason that they get along with each other better than we do. Having to see all the questions and issues alike in order to be "faithful" is a hard way to live. Notice how *The Book of Common Prayer* nails this point down:

Q. What is the New Testament?

A. The New Testament consists of books written by the people of the New Covenant, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to set forth the life and teachings of Jesus and to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom for all people.

I marvel to see this weighty truth so clearly defined in a prayer book. What is the New Covenant? It is the new relationship in Christ. What is the New Testament? It is a book or documents written by the people of the New Covenant. While we have blindly supposed that the New Covenant is made up of books, the Anglicans fathers understood centuries ago that

the New Covenant is made up of people. The people of the New Covenant wrote the books of the New Testament! That says what, this journal has tried to say for decades: *the New Testament did not produce the church (the people of the New Covenant), but the church produced the New Testament.* That means that believers were united in Christ and enjoyed the fellowship of a covenant relationship with Christ long before there was what we call the New Testament. Then how can we make the New Testament (or our interpretation of the New Testament) the basis of fellowship?

This is enough to show that we have things to learn from the Episcopalians, and it may help to explain why so many of our people through the generations have found a comfortable home among them, including some from Alexander Campbell's own family. They can teach us how to draw upon the rich traditions of the church through the centuries. We can learn from their emphasis upon the great truth of the ancient creeds: that the church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. We can learn much from them on the meaning and practice of corporate, devotional worship and the use of devotional literature. They can teach us how to use the Psalms in worship, which are used in abundance in every service, and the use of responsive readings, creedal confessions, and mutual sharing. And they can teach us, a *sitting* church, how to kneel before the God of heaven in prayer. The Episcopalians take the Lord's Supper on their knees! And they can teach us and all sermon-oriented churches how to talk less and worship more and with deeper devotion.

And they can teach us how to be theologically tough (as you see in *The Book of Common Prayer)* without being sectarian. When they serve Holy Communion they invite "all those who have been baptized" to join them.

While they are ecumenical, they have a serious problem in working toward a world-wide fellowship of all believers, which is their doctrine of the apostolic succession of ministry. When I visited with the late William Barclay in Glasgow, Scotland some years ago he told me of the unity talks his own Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) was then having with the Anglicans. "We can talk out things like baptism, but we have reached an impasse on the ministry," he told me. Then he added, "They do not consider me a duly ordained minister of the gospel."

That illustrates how we all have our hangups. But the Episcopalians realize that too, or at least they can joke about it. When the rector learned that I was visiting and studying all the churches in Denton, he joked, "If you are looking for the true church, you are not likely to find it."

But I had an answer for that: "What do you mean? I've been in the true church all my life!"

I can say that and joke and I can say it and not joke. All of us who have been baptized into Christ are in the true church, the one the Episcopalians talk about when they read the Nicene Creed: *We believe in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.*

That is the one true church. But I am not saying that is the "Church of Christ" denomination that I belong to or the "Episcopal Church" that the rector belongs to. But we both might belong to the Body of Christ beyond our denominational affiliation.

The Lord knows those that are his! *-the Editor*

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THE ONE CHURCH INDIVISIBLE

Is Christ divided? — 1 Cor. 1:13

One nation indivisible — Pledge of Allegiance

I was telling Ouida about some things I had learned about Abraham Lincoln, and concluded by saying I might have to write an article about it. Well, here is the article, which is inspired by Lincoln's undying conviction in the indivisible character of the nation over which he served as President. As I said to Ouida, "If we could but see the unity of the church as Lincoln saw the unity of the nation . . ." Paul apparently did, for it seemed impossible to him that Christ or the Body of Christ could be divided.

If ever we had a leader who saw the United States as "One nation indivisible," it was Abraham Lincoln. It was this principle of unity that bore him through the four grueling years of the Civil War, which left him drained and worn. When he first campaigned for the presidency, he made it clear that his intention was neither to end slavery nor to preserve it but rather to "preserve the Union." This became his obsession. But the legislature in South Carolina did not believe him. To them Abraham Lincoln was bad news, and no sooner did they receive word of his election in 1860 that they seceded from the Union.

Even before Lincoln took office the Confederacy was already formed and eventually eleven of the 33 states of the Union had formed themselves into another nation. Even the mayor of New York City, which was dependent on Southern cotton for its mills, threatened to withdraw that city from the Union if the South did.

It was the principle of the inherent union of the States that controlled Lincoln's mind, both in war and in peace. To him the Confederacy was illegal. There was still but one nation *indivisible.* A state or a city can no more secede than a man can leave his wife. They share in a

covenant and in a destiny. To Lincoln secession was unthinkable and intolerable. And whatever else the Civil War accomplished it accomplished that, for no state has ever again assumed the right to secede from the Union.

To Lincoln the United States was not in a war with another nation known as the Confederate States. The United States was at war with itself. It was a very serious and deadly family quarrel. When at Gettysburg he spoke those memorable words "that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth," he was referring to *all* the 33 states of the United States. And when in his second inaugural address he spoke of "bind up the wounds of the nation," he was referring to the North and South alike.

When word reached Washington that General Lee had surrendered at Appomattox Court House, Va. on April 7, *1865,* which was only one week before Lincoln was assassinated, the city celebrated with canon fire and dancing in the streets. When a large crowd gathered on the White House lawn to honor the President who had preserved the Union, Lincoln appeared, haggard and spent, and called for the band to play *Dixie,* a song that he always admired. The song is ours now, he told the crowd, for we are all one people.

President Lincoln celebrated the end of the Civil War by having the band play *Dixie* on the White House lawn! There is something about that spirit that speaks volumes on the meaning of unity, fellowship, and acceptance.

When those who were vengeful toward the South asked Lincoln how he was going to treat the rebels, he replied, "I will treat them as if they had never left." When Congress debated the conditions on which the rebel states would be received back into the Union, Lincoln suggested that there might be no reason for debate in that those states never really left the Union.

One nation indivisible! may well be the crowning principle of our republic. Abraham Lincoln seemed to think so, for he was willing to endure the agonies of a fratricidal war on the basis of it. A divided United States was not a viable option to him.

With such a view of unity and its practical applications Lincoln would have made a good Campbellite, for this was the position held by the leaders of the Stone-Campbell Movement: *the church is indivisible.* And here let us try once more to lay to rest the unfounded rumor among our people that Abe Lincoln was immersed by John O'Kane, a Disciples minister of Indiana, which is now and again retold in some of our papers. The report that O'Kane baptized Lincoln in private and that the President wanted it kept a secret is sheer myth, if for no other reason Lincoln was not the kind of person who would be clandestine about something like

that. Too, no American's life has been so thoroughly researched as Lincoln's, and if he had ever been baptized and joined any church, however furtively, the scholars would have found it out.

Thomas Campbell launched his movement for the unity of all Christians on the principle that the church by its very nature is indivisible. As he put it in the *Declaration and Address,* our most important founding document: *The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one.* He wrote that line in 1809, years before he had his first congregation. He did not say the church *should* be one, or that it *will* be one once he had done his work, but that it *is* one. Since the church is the Body of Christ it cannot be other than one.

Campbell was not saying that the sects were that church, for no sect can be the Body of Christ. He was saying that the true Christians scattered among all the sects are the Body of Christ, and that *they* are one because of their relationship to Christ.

The church may be "divided" in the sense that factions, parties, and sects are imposed upon it, but the Body remains one in spite of all the schisms. It is not unlike a marriage in trouble. The couple may even be separated because of their problems, but still they are one, a unity that they must come to appreciate. Lincoln's America may have been severed by civil strife, but it was still a Union as he saw it. And once the unity is seen and prized, it is less difficult to overcome the debilitating factions.

It is a matter of thinking right about the church. It isn't divided; it can't be. Sects might be, but not the Body of Christ. Lincoln thought of a nation indivisible and he saved the nation. When we think unity, *The church is one!,* we too will more likely behave like unity-minded people.

Did this principle not dominate Paul's mind in his Corinthian correspondence? His resounding question *Is Christ divided?* permeates the entire letter. In spite of factions within the congregation, along with all their other shortcomings, the apostle could still address them as "the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ" (1 Cor. 1:2). Moreover, he spoke of them as "the temple of God" in whom the Spirit of God dwells (3:16). This means that to Paul a divided church is a contradiction, for the Body of Christ is one by its very nature. That Body is God's temple where the Holy Spirit dwells, even when some things are not right.

Sometimes when I sit in an assembly of believers in Denton, Texas, I think of the Body of Christ all around the world, especially in distant nations where I have been privileged to visit - a military retreat center in Korea, a bamboo hut in Thailand, an upper room in Japan, a union church in El Salvador, a store front in Taiwan, an ancient Presbyterian church in Geneva, and on and on, including some forty different churches I've recently visited in my own city. These

are all the one, indivisible church, I say to myself, not that the church is a composite of all denominations, but, as Paul puts it, "all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Cor. 1:2).

Then there is the family of God who is already in heaven, made up of "all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues" (Rev. 7:9), with whom we are in fellowship. So, the church in heaven and upon earth make up the one, indivisible Body of Christ. It can be no more divided than Christ can be divided.

When this great truth permeates our thinking we will no longer allow ourselves to think in terms of a divided church. —*the Editor*

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ULTIMATE LOGICAL CONCLUSIONS

Cecil Hook

In the early days of the Herald of Truth radio program, a lesson was given concerning evolution. I appropriated that ready-made discourse for my use on a broadcast. In the broadcast I emphasized that a person could not believe in evolution while believing in God and the Bible at the same time. That seemed to me to be the ultimate logical conclusion one would have to reach on the subject.

As soon as the lesson was completed, the announcer motioned for me to come to him in the control room. With an expression of bewilderment, he explained to me, "You said that a person cannot believe in evolution and believe in God and the Bible at the same time. I believe in evolution and I also believe in God and the Bible." I was taken by surprise and cannot remember how I answered him.

Could I protest that it was impossible for him to hold those beliefs while he confidently declared that he held them? Could I tell him what he believed or did not believe? I could argue that, taken to its ultimate logical conclusion, one could not believe in evolution without denying God and the Bible.

From that experience I was impressed with a lesson that has been reinforced many other times since: People often form beliefs without reasoning to the ultimate logical conclusion. And I suspect that none of us are exceptions. Let me give some specific illustrations.

Children born into, and growing up in, this world must be subjected to pain, suffering, sorrow, and death. Because the road to heaven is narrow and will be travelled by few, most people will have eternal misery in hell. A few will make it into eternal bliss, but the chances are slim. With this in view, only a cruel, fiendish sadist would bring a child into this world,

gambling that its soul would be among the few. Now, is that not an ultimate logical conclusion which we are forced to reach? Yet, few of us reach that conclusion. We stop short of it and go ahead and bring children into the world. We just don't carry our reasoning to the ultimate logical conclusion.

When we consider the doctrine of election and predestination, we non-Calvinists quickly reach the ultimate logical conclusion that, if individual election is true, there would be no need for evangelism. In fact, it would be senseless and futile, for no one could change the state of the elect or non-elect. So, those who believe in election refrain from all evangelism, don't they? Not at all, for many of them are the most aggressive and diligent missionaries. They do not reason to our ultimate logical conclusion.

Millions of disciples believe that a child of God cannot sin so as to lose his soul. In our refutations of the impossibility of apostasy, we reason that the belief gives license to sin and undermines any initiative to live a clean life. So, all of the Baptists are licentious profligates, aren't they? Not really. They are known for their firm stand on moral issues. Their lives are as clean and dedicated as those who believe that they can sin so as to be lost. They do not follow our reasoning to our ultimate logical conclusion.

One may reason that the person who denies the word-for-word inspiration of the Scriptures or believes that the Bible accounts have some errors denies the validity of the Bible. We reason that, if one rejects a part, he must reject all, for the Bible stands or falls as a unit. That seems to be an ultimate logical conclusion, but many persons stop short of that conclusion.

There may be a vast difference in what is theoretical, logical, and practical, for there are gaps in our knowledge, understanding, and logic. No one can be truly consistent, and our own ultimate logical conclusions are not always so ultimate or logical. We can accept in faith without understanding ultimate logical conclusions.

Can that faith that lacks full understanding be effective in saving? If not, who then can be saved? Faith may even be based on erroneous ideas mixed with true ones and still be true faith if it leads one to Jesus. Faith itself cannot save; Jesus saves. Only that faith which leads us to accept and follow him is necessary.

Belief in the impossibility of apostasy, election, and many other questionable doctrines is harmful only if it weakens the faith or causes one to turn from holy living.

To reach "ultimate logical conclusions" and then reject all those who do not reach the same conclusions is to become a judge with a sectarian spirit. Paul forbade those who reached ultimate logical conclusions which differed concerning eating meat, observing days, and practicing circumcision from binding them on one another. *—1350 Huisache, New Braunfels, TX 78130*

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CEDARS OF LEBANON

W Carl Ketcherside

Lebanon lay to the north of Palestine. Much of it consisted of snow-clad mountains. On these grew the famous cedars which reared themselves heavenward. The Lebanese, being devoid of good farm land, developed a maritime regime. The tall trees became the masts for their sailing boats. The lesser ones provided planks out of which the ships were built. In chapter two of his book, the way we have it divided, Isaiah spoke about the cedars and oaks, and the ships of Tarshish.

He begins with a condemnation of the people. Wealth, in those days was counted by silver, gold, and horses. Their land was full of silver and gold. There was no end to their treasure. The country was full of horses. There was no end to their chariots. But it was also full of idols. The inferior man bowed before them. The great man humbled himself. The voice of the Lord was heard saying "Forgive them not." They are encouraged to hide in caves, and to seek refuge in the dust. It is affirmed that Israel was influenced. They followed foreign customs. They worshiped objects they had made with their own hands.

It has always been a question as to why God's people compromised with sin so easily. From the time they were divinely delivered from Egypt they mouthed criticism of the God who freed them from slavery. They murmured for bread. They murmured for flesh to eat. They wept copious tears for water to drink. Eventually their kings turned the very temple into a place of wild idolatry. "They broke all the laws of the Lord their God and made two metal bulls to worship, they also made an image of the goddess Ashtoreth, worshiped the stars and served the god Baal." They sacrificed their sons and daughters as burnt offerings to pagan gods. They consulted mediums and fortunetellers. They became wholly corrupt and irretrievably rotten.

Isaiah said "Everyone will be humiliated and disgraced." He predicted that a day was coming when human pride would end and human arrogance be destroyed. Men had hidden in caves. They had dug holes in the ground. They took all kinds of means to hide from God's

anger. They wanted to escape from His power and glory. It is then that the prophet spoke of what God would do. "He shall destroy the tall cedars of Lebanon, and all of the oaks in the land of Bashan. He will sink even the largest and most beautiful ships."

I think of that as I gaze at pictures of large and beautiful cities in the pages of popular magazines today. These, too, can pass away! The places where once they stood can become rugged piles of shale. The streets can be blasted into oblivion. The earth can reverberate and be shaken. Our own "Mountains of Lebanon" can be wasted. It is incredible that these things may pass away. But they can, and will! A day is coming when human pride will be ended and human arrogance be destroyed.

It may seem incredible but the day can come when Nashville, Houston, Dallas and Abilene will be blasted into oblivion. Men and women can go skulking to hidden bank vaults to live out their fear and shame. Darkness will be welcome. The light of the sun will be a catastrophe. The explosion of one well-directed nuclear warhead can undo in seconds what it took centuries to erect. The accomplishments of skillful men can disappear in a mingled heap. Young men and women, as well as those who have attained their majority, can be lost in a moment of immediacy. And with them can go all of the gadgets in which they have trusted.

Centuries later, the people who remain, will come searching the ruins, turning over the stones as they now do in Ur and Nineveh, looking for some semblance of a vanished culture, picking up the toys of a previous people. The tall cedars of Lebanon and the sturdy oaks of Bashan will be destroyed, Of course, this does not need to happen. In Isaiah 1:27 God promises to save everyone who repents. In 1:16, 17 we are encouraged to stop doing evil, and learn to do right. Three groups are mentioned as test cases upon whom we can practice. The best protection against atom bombs are lives of righteousness and well-regulated behavior.

Tall cedars growing on towering mountains are beautiful. The wind, sighing among the branches makes an attractive chorus. One likes to drive among the trees. He experiences solace for the soul. He derives a real sense of tranquility. He hesitates to leave and return to the noise and turmoil of the city. But what a difference when a stately grove has been swept by fire. The tangle of trunks and limbs presents a symbol of death and destruction, a holocaust of despair.

I offer a plea. That our own country may maintain its beauty and utility, that it may be a land of freedom and liberty, let all who read this resolve to renounce wickedness and unrighteousness. May we become so pure that the hand of God will have to be spread over us in blessing and not become a mailed fist of punishment. May the cedars of Lebanon continue to be a bright and beautiful decoration of love, joy and peace! God grant it! *—4420 Jamieson 1-C, St. Louis, MO 63109*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

A number of our churches have conducted seminars on AIDS. Two of these are the Cross Lanes Church of Christ in Charleston, WV and the Bering Drive Church of Christ in Houston. A Houston elder, who is chief of internal medicine at Baylor Medical School, is quoted as saying that AIDS could become such an international economic crisis as to curb or even stop the arms race. Another doctor in the Houston church tells how he addressed a large high school on the subject and found the students unconcerned and bored - until he told them that a fourth of them might not live to be 30 because of this disease! That got their attention! The Houston church has formed an "AIDS Task Force" to help deal with the problem in their area. This kind of response to a social problem in our churches reflects an encouraging change. A generation ago we would have been inclined to stand aloof and talk about how sinful the world has become. Now we are responding like the salt of the earth that we are to be.

Wallace Bradberry of Billings, Montana tells us of a unity meeting held in Lincoln, Montana between Christian Churches and Churches of Christ. Dwaine Dunning was the main speaker. While some churches in the area did not participate, Wallace reports that it went well, and he hopes there will be more of them.

Ray Brinkley, now 81, has been going to India each year for some 20 years, staying as long as his visa allows. He reports that there are now 3,000 congregations of Christians. Most of his work has been in the small villages, which are most receptive to the

gospel. There are more than one-half million of these villages, and there are 16 different languages and 1600 dialects. Ray spends much of his time training natives to carry on the work. You can obtain his newsletter by writing to 1616 New York Ave., Orlando, FL 32803.

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BOOK NOTES

I have recently read again both volumes of Robert Richardson's *The Memoirs of Alexander Campbell,* and I found it more exciting than the times before. It is rich in Americana as well as facts about our church history. The description of Walter Scott, for instance, makes marvelous reading, especially when one realizes that the author studied under Scott when a boy. You should get a copy while it is yet in print. We can send you one for $23.95 postpaid.

Loving God With All Your Mind by Gene Edward Veith, Jr. is a book one should read if he is suspicious of educated people, or if he is educated and is inclined to look down on those who are not. It says that the right kind of education is to recognize that God is the Lord of all life, and that everything in life is to be evaluated in terms of what that means. You will like the chapter on "Daniel at the University of Babylon." $7.50 postpaid.

We have a fresh supply of F. F. Bruce's crowning work, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free,* which we can send you for $20.95 postpaid. Bruce is not only a scholar whose writings are forceful and informative, but he writes with heart. When you read his chapter on "Paul and the Athenians," you may suppose you were there with Paul on the Areopagus.

There are 2300 significant words in the New Testament, and all these are treated in "Kittle," as the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* is often called. You may study all these words in the massive nine- volume, 8,420-page set, or you can now get the concise one-volume, 1,400-page edition, which treats all the 2300 words with less detail. And instead of $375.00 for the set, the one-volume edition is only $49.95. You do not have to know Greek to use it.

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READER'S EXCHANGE

One thing for certain, any sincere, searching disciple who has read you and Carl Ketcherside has surely moved forward in his understanding. Hundreds of us who have been encouraged and edified down through the years will acknowledge this fact with gratitude. - *Harold Shasteen, Carterville, IL.*

Why does it have to be a sin *to think.* When I'm tempted to be mad I remember one little line you wrote to me a long time ago: "Remember, we must love our brothers-in- law too." - *Marguerite McSpadden, Dumas, TX.*

I am discovering that many people in the Church of Christ are thinking along the lines of your journal. Some of my friends are just as excited as I am about their freedom in Christ and that we are moving away from legalism. I am so thankful for people like you and brother Ketcherside. Both of you have helped me to hone in on what's really important and how to share it. -*Gail Brummett, La Place, LA.*

Thank you for helping me to come to grips with my unhappiness in the Churches of Christ. My heart rejoices that there are those within the "brotherhood" like you, Cecil Hook, Arnold Hardin who are opposing our legalism and sectarianism. - *David Aechternacht, Lewisville, TX.*

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